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SUBJECT: EUR DAS BRYZA DISCUSSES TURKEY AND CYPRUS WITH EU OFFICIALS

Classified By: USEU POLCOUNS LEE LITZENBERGER; REASONS 1.4 (B,D)

1. (C) Summary: EUR DAS Matt Bryza discussed Turkey's accession talks and Cyprus with EU Council Head of Unit for Enlargement Christos Katharios and Enlargement Unit Principal Administrator David Johns on February 23. Katharios stressed his full commitment to implementing the European Council's decision to proceed with Turkey's EU accession process. He stressed the need for Turkey to reforms that had been stalled for much of the past year. On Cyprus, Katharios agreed to examine options for opening Famagusta port, perhaps in conjunction with return of Varosha to the ROC, as a way to help Turkey implement its obligation to open Turkish ports to Greek Cypriot shipping. End summary.

Turkey

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2. (C) EU Council Head of Unit for Enlargement Katharios presented his view of how Turkish accession talks are proceeding and how the US and the EU can cooperate in this area. His main goal as Head of Unit, he said at the outset, is to make irreversible the European Council decision to proceed with Turkey's EU accession process. He worried that the longer Turkey's reforms remain stalled, as they had been for the past year, the deeper the disconnect will get between the EU and Turkey.

3. (C) Katharios said Turkish politics was increasingly split between political Islam and Kemalism. The EU is trying to convince Kemalists to promote a better image of Turkey in the international community - which has been dented after recent trials in Ankara on insulting "Turkishness" - and trying to find a 'modus vivendi' for political Islam. Turkey will have to convince European publics that it shares European values. Katharios asked for US help in trying to send a strong message to the Turkish government on the need for improved treatment of its Christian minority population.

4. (C) David Johns, Katharios' deputy, cited the challenge of the Turkish negotiating 'mindset.' The US and the EU should try to convince the Turkish establishment to "give, give, give" in the beginning of accession talks and then, in the end, Turkey will get something big out of the negotiations -- EU membership. The Turks, on the other hand, have a different attitude toward negotiation. They think they have to get something substantial out of every round of negotiations they have; they should realize they are not losing face by not getting something out of every negotiation. Turkey cannot let the small irritants get in the way of the bigger picture - EU accession. Turkey would need to recognize the Republic of Cyprus and implement its obligations to open its ports to Greek Cypriot ships.

5. (C) DAS Bryza recognized that these frustrations stem from Turkey's simultaneously feeling strategically indispensable and insecure in its place in Europe. He expressed hope that as Turkey felt increasingly secure about its place in Europe, it would become less obstinate in accession negotiations. In any event, pressing Turkey to recognize the Republic of Cyprus and open its ports with no corresponding benefits for Turkish Cypriots risked driving Turkey away from the EU accession process. Such steps could also jeopardize a comprehensive Cyprus settlement by forcing Ankara to play its last two cards prematurely, thereby allowing the Republic of Cyprus to dig in its heels even deeper, as it operates from a position of strength within the EU.

Cyprus

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6. (C) Katharios acknowledged that the Republic of Cyprus has been obstructionist with respect to Turkey's EU accession. He agreed with DAS Bryza that the U.S. and EU should build on Ankara's recent proposal to open Turkish ports to Greek Cypriot ships in exchange for lifting all restrictions on Turkish Cypriot ports. Katharios further agreed that one way to do so would be to take another look at the "Famagusta/Varosha" proposal of Luxembourg's EU Presidency,

according to which Famagusta port would be open for commerce with Turkish Cypriots under the administration of the UN (for security) and EU (for customs, documentation, etc), while the village of Varosha would be returned to Greek Cypriot administration. Katharios and Bryza agreed that neither Turkey, Turkish Cypriots, nor Greek Cypriots would accept this proposal as it currently stood, but that it might prove workable with some adjustments. Katharios was encouraged by the initiative of the Austrian Presidency (including from Chancellor Schussel) to pass an aid package for northern Cyprus on February 27 in the General Affairs Council of the EU. All agreed that the UN should remain the primary actor in brokering a comprehensive Cyprus settlement, although the EU and U.S. could help the sides' breach their differences.

17. (U) DAS Bryza has cleared this cable.

Gray

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